

## 43rd ASSEMBLY DISTRICT • ASSEMBLY DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS CHAIR

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## Jorgensen's Journal: Bad Budget Didn't Have to Be This Way

The budget's been signed. The deal is done.

While that's a relief for Governor Scott Walker – who was clearly anxious to finish it up before his big campaign announcement, it is devastating news for Wisconsin.

Here's why.

This budget cuts funding for a majority of school districts – including Cambridge, Janesville, Milton, and Oregon. Republicans are also funneling \$800 million from our public schools to their friends in the private, unaccountable voucher program over the next decade. For most children, these changes will mean larger class sizes and fewer educational opportunities.

UW-Whitewater saw its support slashed by \$5.8 million, and UW-Rock County will share a \$5 million cut with other two-year colleges. Expect job losses and fewer class offerings as a result.

In this budget, Republicans are borrowing another \$500 million, kicking the can down the road on transportation funding for future generations to handle. Meanwhile, they're failing to fix many of our state's roads and bridges, delaying major projects like the I-39/90 expansion, a move which will trigger massive job losses in the construction industry.

The budget eliminates living wage provisions and partially repeals prevailing wage law, meaning hardworking Wisconsinites will be bringing home smaller paychecks. At the same time, Republicans found ways to create new tax breaks for their wealthy campaign donors and corporate special interests backing the Governor's political ambitions.

Without hyperbole, this budget is – by far - the worst I've ever seen.

Maybe that's why 11 Republicans voted against it. Maybe that's why Governor Walker vetoed an administration-record 104 budget provisions.

But, the messy process and terrible final product is trouble of Republicans' own creation. It didn't have to be this way.



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In their budget process, Republicans turned a \$500 million surplus into a \$500 million deficit. And, time and again, they rejected ideas to offset their embarrassing predicament.

In fact, Democrats offered 31 amendments on the Assembly floor alone. But, to each and every one of our suggestions, Republicans said no.

That's not to say we didn't have some impact.

You might remember, I launched a statewide petition drive to save SeniorCare, the popular, low-cost prescription drug program, and after collecting 15,000 signatures, pressured my Republican colleagues to keep it up and running.

You might also recall that the Joint Finance Committee approved dark-of-the-night motions endangering the future of the Wisconsin Retirement System and gutting the state's open records laws. The deafening – and swift - public outcry over these changes compelled Republicans to drop their proposals.

I asked Governor Walker to veto additional payday lender powers and an unfair provision limiting wineries from hosting weddings and other special events; the Governor struck those from the bill.

Take heart: our voices still have power.

But, if we're going to tackle the bigger issues, like education, taxes, health care, job creation, Wisconsin will need different leaders - leaders who share our values.

It doesn't have to be this way. Not forever. While the budget work is completed, the fight for Wisconsin's future – our future – continues.

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